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NO. LTC # 238-2007

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor David Dermer and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: October 30, 2007

SUBJECT: **NEIGHBORHOOD MONTHLY MEETINGS**

As most of you have noticed, there has been a recent increase in the level of civic participation and neighborhood activism in the North Beach area. Several new homeowner associations have been formed and others reactivated.

Civic participation is always welcome by the City and is a healthy sign for community improvement. To build on this positive development and in order to provide appropriate and sustained assistance and response to the different neighborhood and citizen interests, the City will be facilitating a regular monthly meeting in the North Beach area to discuss a wide range of community issues.

The monthly meetings will be facilitated by the City's Neighborhood Services Department on a date and time that is generally agreeable to the interested homeowners in the North Beach area. All homeowners groups and interests will be invited to attend and the intent of the meetings will be to broadly share information from and with key departments of the City and to provide appropriate follow-up. At this time, it is anticipated that the Police Department, the Public Works Department, the Parks Department and Code Compliance will be regular participants in the monthly meetings. Other departments such as Parking and the Fire Department can be invited as interests or issues dictate. The Capital Improvement Department will be invited as they already have a routine means for communicating with neighborhood groups on projects within specific neighborhoods. The monthly meetings are not intended to interfere or to displace that process, as it is effective in its own right. In addition, the sheer volume of CIP issues that are currently raised in their meetings would overwhelm discussion on other issues relating to other departments.

The monthly neighborhood meetings will allow the City to routinely commit staff resources to the issues raised by North Beach area homeowners groups. At the present, the City is becoming overwhelmed with weekly requests from a variety of North Beach groups asking staff to visit the area. As these meetings are increasing in number, we are also finding that as individual departments attempt to respond, we end up with duplication or the wrong department in place to deal with the issue that is presented by the homeowners group. We believe that the monthly format will help us address that problem and provide for a better coordinated use of City resources and less duplication of effort.

The monthly meetings will also help the City Administration in communicating on a regular and coordinated basis with the entire City Commission regarding issues and/or projects that are being addressed by the operating departments. At the present, some of the neighborhood groups communicate individually with Commissioners, some with groups of

Commissioners and some to none of the Commissioners, creating an overlap in some instances or lack of information in other instances. The monthly meeting format will allow the City Administration to directly and more expeditiously coordinate citizen issues and requests on a more structured basis.

Neighborhoods that enjoy or find walking tours helpful can of course continue to do these tours without the necessity of staff participating, and then feed the identified information into the monthly meetings. Normal department contacts and outreach particularly in the Police and Neighborhood Services departments will continue unaffected. To the extent that emergencies or other significant issues develop between the monthly meetings, they will of course be addressed by the appropriate department.

The monthly meeting format will also help the City provide a balanced response to different issues and requests. The Administration makes an effort to deal with all requests equally regardless of whether it was staff initiated, a direct call from a citizen or a report to a Commissioner. The monthly format will help dispel any perceptions that one area is favored either by virtue of whom they communicate with, or provided more services than other areas.

The monthly meeting concept was discussed with the Presidents of North Beach area Homeowner Associations on Friday, October 19th. The concept and the coordinated effort of the City were enthusiastically received.

The first monthly meeting will be set up for November 1, 2007, and as the program moves forward, we will be able to provide status reports to the City Commission on its success or any adjustments that may be needed to fine tune this process.

JMCM/MSam

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